

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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CNO WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, GR, US

SUBJECT: REACTION TO AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISE PHIBLEX 2-7T

1. SUMMARY. GREEK PRESS REACTION TO PHIBLEX 2-7T, A SEVEN-DAY (AUGUST 15-22) U.S. MARINE AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISE NEAR NEAPOLIS AT THE SOUTHEASTERN TIP OF THE PELOPONNESUS, WAS RELATIVELY LIGHT AND FACTUAL IN TONE, EXCEPT FOR THE TWO COMMUNIST DAILIES. ALTHOUGH ALLEGED LOCAL INDIGNATION AND PROTEST WAS A PRINCIPAL THEME OF THE LEFTIST PRESS, THE REACTION OF INHABITANTS OF THE IMMEDIATE EXERCISE AREA APPARENTLY RANGED FROM INDIFFERENCE TO A CORDIAL WELCOME. END SUMMARY.

2. RIZOSPATIS (ORGAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE
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EXTERIOR) LED OFF COVERAGE OF PHIBLEX 2-7T ON AUGUST 11 BY

REPORTING THAT NEWS OF THE SCHEDULED EXERCISE WAS CAUSING INDIGNATION AMONG THE INHABITANTS OF LACONIA, THE AREA BETWEEN NEAPOLIS AND SPARTA. LOCAL PROTEST, POLICE SUPPRESSION OF PROTEST, CROP DAMAGE AND THE INCONGRUITY OF PERMITTING U.S. FORCES TO EXERCISE IN GREECE WHILE TURKEY WAS THREATENING GREECE IN THE AEGEAN WERE RECURRING THEMES IN DAILY ARTICLES BY RIZOSPATIS AND AVGHI (COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE INTERIOR) AND LESS FREQUENT ARTICLES BY ATHINAIKI (LEFT OF CENTER, PRO-PASOK). ON AUGUST 14, ESTIA (ULTRA CONSERVATIVE) AGREED THAT THE MARINES' PRESENCE WOULD BE A PROVOCATION AT A TIME WHEN TURKEY, ALLEGEDLY WITH U.S. SUPPORT, WAS BEING ESPECIALLY OFFENSIVE.

3. OTHERWISE, PRESS COVERAGE WAS RELATIVELY LIGHT, FACTUAL AND NEUTRAL IN TONE. ALL PAPERS REPORTED THAT THE LANDINGS WERE PUBLISHED ON AUGUST 16 AND THE MORNING OF AUGUST 17, BECAUSE OF A NATIONAL HOLIDAY, WAS DELAYED UNTIL THE AFTERNOON AUGUST 17 AND MORNING AUGUST 18 NEWSPAPERS. EXCEPT FOR RIZOSPATIS AND AVGHI, INTEREST DROPPED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LANDING. ONLY THESE TWO PAPERS, LEFTISH ELEFTHERTOTYPIA AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE THHENS NEWS, REPORTED ON AUGUST 23 AND 24 THE MARINES' DEPARTURE.

4. PRESS COVERAGE WAS ENLIVENED BY A BRIEF SLANGING MATCH BETWEEN AVGHI AND ELEFTHEROS COSMOS (RIGHT WING). TWO ATTRACTIVE YOUNG LADIES (WE UNDERSTAND THEY WERE BRITISH ARCHEOLOGIST FROM A NEARBY DIG) WERE AMONG THE SPECTATORS AS THE MARINES SET UP THEIR BEACHHEAD. AN AVGHI REPORTER EVIDENTLY ASKED A GREEK LIAISON OFFICER IF THE LADIES WERE PART OF THE LANDING FORCE. HE RECEIVED WHAT THE PAPER HUFFED ON AUGUST 18 WAS "AN IMPERTINENT REPLY". ELETHEROS COSMOS EDITORIALIZED THE NEXT DAY THAT THE RESPONSE WAS APPROPRIATE CONSIDERING THE SOURCE AND CALIBER OF THE QUESTION. AVGHI REBUTTED ON AUGUST 20, CASTIGATING ELEFTHEROS COSMOS' POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS AND PRESENTING A PICTURE OF THE LADIES TALKING WITH PERSONNEL ON SHORE TO SUPPORT ITS CASE. TA NEA (LEFTISH, OPPOSITION) WON THE LIBRARY LAURELS IN THIS EPISODE ON AUGUST 19, HOWEVER, BY CREATING A SAGE AROUND SEVERAL PICTURES OF THE LADIES. TA NEA REPORTED THAT THEY HAD SUPPOSEDLY FOLLOWED THE MARINES TO TWO CANCELLED EXERCISES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN SICILY AND SARDINIA, AND TO WHODES AND MYKONOS IN AY WHEN DEMONSTRATIONS PREVENTED THE USS AMERICA, THE USS MCCANDLESS AND THE USS YARNELL FROM PUTTING LIBERTY PARTIES ASHORE, BEFORE REUNITED WITH SWEETHEARTS IN THE LANDING PARTY.

5. RIZOSPASTIS ON AUGUST 18 CARRIED THE ONLY PICTORIAL EVIDENCE OF DEMONSTRATIONS OFFERED BY THE PRESS-- A PICTURE OF A DOZEN RELAXED YOUTHS, TWO HOLDING "GO HOME" SIGNS, POSING

ON AN UNIDENTIFIED PIER.

6. THE ONLY DIRECT EVIDENCE OF OPPOSITION TO THE LANDINGS RECEIVED BY THE EMBASSY IS IN A RESOLUTION RECEIVED BY MAIL AUGUST 23 FROM THE NUMICIPAL COUNCIL OF PIRAEUS, THE SEAPORT OF ATHENS (REPORTED SEPTEL). THE RESOLUTION IS DIRECTED AGAINST SHIP VISIT TO PIRAEUS, BUT ALSO PROTESTS AGAINST THE PHIBLEX EXERCISE.

7. COMMENT: OUR IMPRESSION FROM VARIOUS OFFICIAL U.S. REPORTS AND A BRIEF VISIT TO THE BEACHHEAD BY EMBASSY POL/MIL OFFICERS IS THAT SUFFICIENT POLICE WERE ON HAND IN A PERIMETER AROUND THE AREA TO PREVENT A DEMONSTRATION HAD THEY BEEN NEEDED. THE ONLY REPORTED CONTACTS OF THE MARINES WITH LOCAL INHABITANTS WERE FRIENDLY. THE TASK FORCE COMMANDER AND HIS STAFF DEVELOPED VERY CORDIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS AND THE LOCAL MAYOR GAVE A FAREWELL LUNCH IN THEIR HONOR. AN ENTERPRISING SUPPLIER DID BOOMING SALES IN WATERMELON, SODA AND BEER AT THREE TEMPORARY STANDS. THE ONLY REPORTED DAMAGE TO CROPS OCCURRED WHEN THIRTEEN OLIVE SAPLINGS WERE MISTAKEN FOR BRUSH. A CLAIMS OFFICER IMMEDIATELY BEGAN A ROUTINE RESTITUTION PROCESS. ALL IN ALL PHIBLEM 2-7T WENT WELL WITHOUT ANY UNTOWARD INCIDENTS OR SERIOUS ADVERSE REACTION.
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